

Conf
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#651

The Last time.
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THE LAST TIME.

“HE didn’t think it was the last time!” said the weeping widow of a labouring man who had met with sudden death the day before. “He got his breakfast as usual and went out to his work; he didn’t think it was the last time!” No, poor widow, he did not think so; nor did you, or the neighbours, or the men he worked with. There was nothing to make any one think his end was so near; for he was not past the prime of life, and was as strong and healthy as most men. Yet so it was; a few hours after the husband and wife parted at the cottage door, he was brought home to die. A heavy stone slipped, the plank on which it rested broke in the middle, one part flew up and struck him on the forehead; in an instant he lay senseless on the ground and never spoke ten words more.

Such things make a sensation, as well they may. The change is so great (greatest of all to the poor man himself, but great also to wife and children and all belonging to him) that neighbors and work-mates for the time can talk of nothing else; and much real feeling is

drawn forth. Just before writing this I saw an account of five persons killed by a railway accident. How little they thought, when they stepped into the train, that they were doing so *for the last time!*

A fire happened lately in a large City and no fewer than eight of the people in the house were burned to death. Little did they think, as they lay down in bed that night, that it was *the last time!* A fishing-boat went out one fine morning: before night a squall came on, and the boat was never heard from again: the poor men, who had been used to fishing all their lives, little thought that this was *the last day's* fishing they would ever have.

These, however, are what are called accidents, rare and unexpected things, which happen only now and then, and surprise all who hear of them: this is not the usual course of things. But, reader, does it ever strike you that there will be a *last time* for every one of the common things which you do day by day? It may not come suddenly, as in the cases here mentioned; but come it will. You will rise some morning and go to your work for the *last time*; some evening you will go to rest for the *last time*; the day will come when you will eat your *last meal*, take your *last walk*, read your *last book*. There is not a thing you are doing now, that you will not some day do *for the last time*. And this, whether the things be good or bad. Do you frequent a

place of worship? Some day you will go there *for the last time*. Do you neglect the house of God? Some Lord's day you will hear the bell ringing, and, as usual, pay no attention to it, and never hear it again. Are you a *drinker*? The day will come when your foot will cross the threshold of the drinking-shop *for the last time*. Do you *swear*? Some day an oath will pass your lips, and, little as you may think so, it will be your *last*.

Would that these words might come true in another way! That you might be *changed*, and so never swear again, never more set foot in a drinking-shop, never again neglect God's house! But, remember, should no change take place—should you go on Sabbath-breaking, drinking, swearing—still you will some day do each of these *for the last time*.

Now, reader, you know all this. Every body knows it. But many forget it; perhaps *you* do. There is much to make us forget it. Things generally go on in a very even course; one day is much like another; what you did yesterday you are doing to-day, and are very likely to do to-morrow. This is what made those people scoff, of whom the apostle Peter writes: "Where," said they, "is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." But turn to your Bible and see how the apostle answers them: "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years.

and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men [those very scoffers themselves] count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night," etc. 2 Pet. iii. 8-10. Yes! however appearances may be against it, "the day of the Lord *will* come;" and equally sure it is that though you may have done the very things you are now doing a thousand times before, yet you will some day do them all *for the last time*. It is very likely that you will know it is the last time, just as it happened in the cases before-mentioned; but whether you know it when it comes or not, *the last time will come*. May God give you grace to be ready.

Oh! reader, when you have slept and risen, and eaten and drunk *for the last time*, when you have looked your last, and breathed your last, where will you be? Have you thought of that? Do you think of it every day, and make it your first concern?—Ah! do not live as though you were never to die. Do not let day after day slip by as if your days were never to end. Remember that solemn parable of our Lord in Luke xiii. 6-9: "A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, 'Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit

on this fig-tree, and find none; cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" And he, answering, said unto him, 'Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.'" Perhaps *you* have been like that fig-tree, without fruit; and perhaps another year's trial has been allowed you, and *this*, it may be, is that last time of grace obtained for you, and when *this* is gone no more will be granted.

Oh! instead of fancying that because things go on as usual the end will never come, thank God that it has not come while you were unprepared. It was mercy that kept it back, His mercy who "long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." But for this, where might you have been now?

But what if it should all be in vain? What if this should be the last day of grace, and you should neglect it? What if the end should be close at hand, and you should remain careless and hard, impenitent, unpardoned? I beseech you, dear reader, whoever you are,—I beseech you by the mercies of God, do not turn away from these thoughts, but think now of *the last time*. Think now while you may, for the end may be very near. He who has borne with you so long still waits to be gracious; the Saviour who died for you still pleads for you and loves you, and is even now knocking at

the door of your heart. "Behold," says He, "I stand at the door and knock." But it may be the last time. Open and let him in. Hearken, yes, hearken to this gracious and loving Saviour! He loves you, though you have never loved him. He has shown that he does, again and again. If he had not loved you, the last time would have come to you long ago, and found you not ready. If he did not love you, he would not send you so many kind messages; warning you of danger, telling you of mercy, inviting you to look unto him and be saved. Even this little tract comes to you with a message from him.

But, Oh! let there be no more delay! "That thou doest, do quickly." You have slighted messages enough. You have long enough tried the patience and love of Jesus. Try him no longer. Open and let him in,—at once—without delay; or he may never knock again.

And then, dear reader, at peace with God through Christ, joined to the Saviour by a living faith, sprinkled with his blood, washed, pardoned, accepted, justified; and, by the Spirit's help, walking in the way of everlasting life,—then you need not fear to think of the last time, for even if the Lord Jesus come suddenly, he will not find you sleeping.

A FRIENDLY CALL.

ALL you into whose hands this little book shall come, O let me beg you to consider how your hearts can endure to think of being shut out of heaven, out of blessedness for ever! Ask your heart these questions. Can I endure the vengeance of eternal fire? Will a glowing oven, a scorching furnace, be an easy lodging for me? O why, my soul, wilt thou not be persuaded to repent? Talk to thee of crucifying the flesh, or parting with thy worldly companions, of entering in at the strait gate; O these are hard sayings, who can bear them? But how wilt thou dwell with devouring fire? How wilt thou dwell with everlasting burnings? Think on hell, O poor soul, and then think on Christ; and consider if a Redeemer from such misery is not worth accepting of. Think on hell, and then think on sin, and carnal pleasures; consider how thou wilt relish them in the everlasting fire! Are these the price for which thou sellest thy soul to hell? O bid these lusts and pleasures be gone! bid your companion-sins be gone; and though you love them well, and have spent your time sinfully with them, yet tell them you must not burn for them: that you will not damn your soul to please your flesh.

O poor soul! Hast thou kept Christ out a long time, and art thou not yet resolved to open thy heart to him? What shall I say to thee? Let me say this—Christ waits still for thee; Christ is still willing to receive thee! Why, then, wilt thou undo thyself by neglecting so great a salvation? Think what message He sends to thee, what errand he comes on; it is no dismal message, it is no dreadful errand. If Christ had come to destroy thy soul, could he have had less welcome than thou hast given him? O for thy soul's sake receive Him! O ye fools, when will ye be wise? Come unto Jesus and he will have mercy on you, and heal all your backslidings, and love you freely.

But some poor soul will say, I have a desire to come to Christ, but I am afraid Christ will never receive such a wretched sinner as I am, who have stood out so long

against him. In answer to this, let me give you some directions.

1. Ah poor soul, art thou willing to come to Christ? Then will Christ in no wise cast thee out, if thou comest to Him poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. O sinner, come not to him in thine own strength! but come thou and say, O Lord, here is a poor soul not worth any thing! O Lord, make me rich in faith! here is a miserable soul, O Lord, have mercy on me! here is a poor blind soul, O Lord, enlighten me from above! here is a poor naked wretch, O Lord, save me, lest I perish, for I cannot help myself.

2. Come to Christ by believing in him. Yes, when thy poor soul is sinking into hell, and sees no way to escape the fearful wrath of God, O then at such a time seize fast hold on Christ! O apprehend and apply all his benefits to thy soul! Come and grasp him in the arms of thy faith, and say, I believe in thee, Lord; help my unbelief. And the answer which thy Lord will give thee, will be this—Be it unto thee according as thou wilt. Let Christ be in your hand, and the promise in your eye, and no doubt, though thou hast been a rebel and a traitor, yet Jesus Christ, having received gifts for the rebellious, will show mercy to thee, and receive thee.

3. Come to Jesus Christ by repenting and forsaking all thy sins. Thou canst never come to the wedding without the wedding garment; the old man must be done away, before all things can be made new. “O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness, that thou mayst be saved; how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?”

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